



# Indiana Department of Education

Dr. Katie Jenner, Secretary of Education

## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Indiana State Board of Education  
**FROM:** Office of School Accountability, Indiana Department of Education  
**RE:** Third-Party Recognition Petition for the Association of Classical and Christian Schools (ACCS)  
**DATE:** November 3, 2021

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This memorandum provides a summary of the information provided by the organization in the petition, as well as the Department's final recommendation regarding the recognition of the Association of Classical and Christian Schools (ACCS) as a third-party accrediting organization.

### **Background & Organization Overview**

***Mission and Objectives:*** ACCS is an accrediting organization whose mission is described as "We promote, establish, and equip schools committed to a classical approach to education in the light of a Christian worldview grounded in the Old and New Testament Scriptures. We promote the classical approach and provide accountability for member schools to ensure that our cultural heritage is not lost again. Through these various means, ACCS seeks to set an educational standard for a unified and directed approach to classical and Christian learning."

ACCS was founded in 1994 and has served as an accrediting organization since 2000 and accredits schools across the United States.

***Member Schools:*** Currently, ACCS has 50 fully accredited member schools, as well as ten (10) schools that have been approved as candidates for full ACCS accreditation. ACCS has not fully accredited any schools in Indiana but has identified one (1) Indiana school as a candidate for ACCS accreditation.

***Agency Personnel:*** In its petition, ACCS lists its director of accreditation and their experience, as well as outlining the process by which appropriate personnel are selected for school visit committees. Specifically, each committee is appointed by the director of accreditation and includes members of the "ACCS Board of Directors...the director of accreditation, the headmaster (or equivalent) or administrator of an ACCS-accredited school, or administrators who have served at an ACCS-accredited school in the past five years," with preference given to individuals with prior accreditation committee experience and with administration experience in schools with "...equivalent or greater enrollment than the school being evaluated."

### **Accreditation Process and Procedures**

***Review and Approval Process:*** To participate in ACCS's one (1) to two (2) year accreditation process, schools must first be accepted as a candidate for accreditation by demonstrating that they meet the association's Conditions of Eligibility. Once a school has been accepted as a candidate for ACCS accreditation, it must then participate in an on-site previsit with either the director of accreditation or their designee. Candidate schools are encouraged to schedule the previsit as soon as possible to allow them more time to address any issues found during the previsit prior to the Site Visit by the ACCS accreditation committee.

In addition to the previsit, candidates must also complete a self-study prior to the accreditation committee's site visit, and no more than one (1) year after being designated as a candidate for accreditation. During the self-study, "...schools will study all standards and requirements,



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conduct self-evaluations, train personnel, and make necessary changes and adjustments seeking to meet all of the ACCS Conditions of Eligibility and Criteria for Accreditation.” Schools are expected to incorporate input from all members of the school administration and staff in their self-study. Candidates are expected to complete and submit the self-study in advance of the accreditation committee Site Visit to allow committee members to review the self-study and affirm aspects of the school’s operation during the Site Visit.

Candidates must then host a Site Visit by the accreditation committee, who review the school’s educational practices and compare their observations with the materials included in the self-study, including, but not limited to, “...classroom pedagogy, student participation and development, staff relations, parent-teacher relations, financial policies and procedures, board oversight, and community support.” At the conclusion of the Site Visit, the candidate meets with the accreditation committee and receives the committee’s general thoughts and impressions of their observations during the self-study.

***Expectations and Requirements for Approval:*** Once the accreditation committee completes its visit, it submits a formal report to the ACCS director of accreditation within three (3) weeks of the visit. Accreditation reports have three (3) types of determinations that are always in reference to a specific standard: commendation, where the school’s practice exceeds the standard in such a way that it deserves commendation, recommendation, where the school’s practice could be improved by taking the recommended action, but the school meets the minimum requirements for that standard, or discrepancy, where the school falls short of one (1) of the standards in its practices, specifying whether the discrepancy is major or minor in nature.

Once the director reviews the committee’s recommendation, a formal recommendation on the school’s accreditation status is drafted and forwarded to an ad-hoc committee consisting of the visit committee chairman, the director of accreditation, and the board president. Recommendations range from full accredited status to provisional or probationary accreditation, to failed accreditation (and continued candidacy status). The ad-hoc committee makes a final determination as to whether the school receives accreditation, then notifies the school of the determination. Schools may appeal the ad-hoc committee’s determination, which is then reviewed and adjudicated by the ACCS Board of Directors.

***Assistance, Monitoring and Communication:*** ACCS maintains regular contact with schools throughout the accreditation cycle, requiring schools to submit annual updates to ensure schools remain in compliance with ACCS accreditation standards.

### **Accreditation Standards**

***Standards and Expectations:*** The ACCS Accreditation Standards focus on eleven (11) core areas, with each area comprised of standards broken down in three (3) categories candidates must address: the standard’s principle, indicators, and required documentation.

***Evaluation Process:*** Candidates for ACCS accreditation are expected to demonstrate compliance with all accreditation standards to receive full accreditation. Candidates with area(s) of deficiency may be awarded provisional accreditation until the deficiencies are addressed, while member schools found to be deficient during the school’s annual update may be required to submit additional documentation as part of an accreditation review.



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## **Signed Recognition Agreement**

ACCS provided the Department with a signed copy of the recognition agreement and was awarded points accordingly.

## **Department Recommendation**

Each petition is reviewed and scored based on an established rubric where an organization may earn a score between 0 and 4. The Department recommends for approval a petition receiving a final score of 3 or higher. After reviewing and scoring the materials provided, ACCS received a final score of 3.53 out of 4 possible points. Since ACCS received a score higher than 3, the Department recommends that ACCS's petition for recognition be approved for a recognition term of five (5) years.